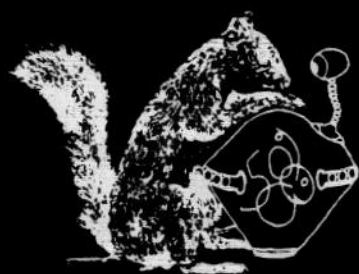


INDIANA  
JONES

and

THE  
PILLARS  
OF  
DESTRUCTION



**gweetna productions 1985**

## INDIANA JONES AND THE PILLARS OF DESTRUCTION

by Cayte Haast-Ford

"Today's not Tuesday," the tall professor mused taking off his glasses and wiping them absently with a handkerchief. Replacing them, he glanced at the dusty calendar in the hall once again. "March 1936, no wonder," he chuckled. The year was 1938.

He had a lot on his mind: the recent find of the thirteen solid gold spiders in the temple at Belize by his colleague and friend Jock McDuff, the rumblings about mysterious goings on in the Russian tundra and the love notes sent to him daily by the feisty eighteen year old in his Introduction to Archaeology class.

Continuing to wander deep in thought he turned and entered the men's bathroom as was his habit before his 2 p.m. class. Standing in the sacred male domain he was suddenly aware of another presence - the little girl in his class. He turned in midstream. She looked a lot older dressed in the dark purple robes of a cult he couldn't quite place. "Young lady, this is the men's..." he started to say. She threw the fine stiletto blade with practised ease. The painful shock of its penetration into the base of his neck caused him to drop to his knees. He tried to reach back to pull out the slender blade but was rendered immobile by the fast acting agent on its tip. He fell forward with a grunt striking his head on the porcelain surface.

\* \* \* \* \*

Permafrost stretched for a hundred miles. The glistening terrain reflected a blinding glare. No trees, just an occasional rock penetrated the crystal surface, a gray eruption. His head hurt, he was cold and he had to

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sneeze...it was the soft stuff, the fur...an animal attacking his face... he gasped...no...it was a parka...his face was nested in fur. He tried to sit up...he might as well have been a block of ice.

There was sound...he tried to concentrate...it was muffled by the swathing fur...like the sound of...yes, the sound of a runner across the ice...his sled. He slipped into a dream of childhood - sitting on the red wooden slates, the wind biting his cheeks, the tree looming up in his path... he screamed and snapped into reality.

Then he could hear the dogs, he just couldn't place what they were. They huffed along as they pulled the sled across the ice. The peasant drivers urged them on. There were three sleds in all. Dr. Indiana Jones was tied securely to the middle one. They headed north.

\* \* \* \* \*

Quietly Jock McDuff slid open the double thickness glass door. The lock had been no sweat - it was his own. Carefully he plucked each golden spider from its perch and wrapped it in soft cloth. As the fourth was carefully placed in the large leather sack sweat beaded up on his forehead. By the time the seventh arachnid nested in the pouch he was blinded by sweat burning his eyes. Why would a top scientist from Boston University steal the priceless objects he had loaded in the cabinet only that morning. Influence of a strange drug? Hypnosis? Blackmail? Gun to his head? None of the above, actually.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Jones was mesmerized by the icy sound of the sled runners and the steady drive of the dogs, yapping and slobbering in the frigid air. He dozed several times. His frontal lobes ached from the residual effects of the potent drug on the stiletto. Contracting sharply with each breath his nostrils reacted to the 30 below zero air. Nothing seemed to matter. He was disembodied; he couldn't concentrate. If he had been asked his name he would not have been able to respond. Only nine hours into the icy run, the ice split open with a slow screeching steadiness that shattered the stillness of the tundra. Booming waves of water born out of the rift shot fifty feet into the air. Three sleds disappeared into the white water.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the leaded mirror her face appeared softer than it was in harsh daylight. She wore no make up. Her nose was long and thick through the bridge. Her blue eyes were too close together and her cheek bones were too high, a result of the Chinese influence contributed by her great-grandmother Wa-Loi. Unadorned by paint her lips were full and sensuous. Beneath the fox furs she possessed a large muscular body the result of the harsh physical urgencies of this frozen land. Her mother and father existed as political prisoners. Life was not harsh to her because it was the only life she had ever known except for her sheltered years in medical school in Vladivostok. It was filled with intellectual stimulation. Her mother practiced openly as a physician and clandestinely as a poet. A mining engineer, her father Ladislav took her on voyages deep into the earth. As a child Marfa Nosgrodiv spent hours in wondrous caves and narrow crawls. Now she was working in the local clinic, a junior physician with a love of rocks and dark places. Politics certainly was not one of her interests. It came as a complete surprise when the secret police came and took her away.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It is quite simple," the tall scientist explained to his assistant. "By



controlling the flow of magma we can precipitate volcanic action anywhere on earth. Can you imagine the surprise of those capitalist dogs when the cone rises in Central Park, U.S.A.?"

The younger man pulled at his lip, "Um um, yes Sir, that certainly would be impressive." He scratched his nose, "But Sir it is only rumor that the ancient diagrams exist. After all, legends of engineering feats by an ancient civilization possibly aided by men from space is a bit preposterous do you not think, Sir?"

"But Pitrov, they do exist. A ceramic cylinder - old beyond belief - by our own best dating methods was found in a river bed near Lake Baikal. The language is undiscernable - resembling nothing we know on earth - the diagrams, however are brilliantly clear. They show how a system of checks and balances can alleviate volcanic action by diverting it into harmless areas. We, of course, shall use this as a tool of war diverting volcanic action to suit our political and military needs," Alexi Gorgonovitch let forth a splendid evil bellow laden with spittle.

He was hideous beyond compare. Even his assistant could not look at him for long. A laboratory accident had blown away the left side of his face. He wore a leather covering which flipped when he spoke revealing his gold inlaid molars and his tongue - quite visible since he had no cheek. The leather was foul from catching food and drink (especially vodka) and he insisted that it should not be changed because it was too difficult to break in new leather. Some said the explosion had addled his brain but actually he had been ripping the wings off flies and drowning kittens since he was a boy.

"We have traced the origin of the cylinder by studying the river bed from whence it came," he spit, "There are five additional cylinders, of course, that is very clear from the diagram! We have no doubt that they will be found. That is where Dr. Jones comes in. He will translate the language for us."

"But, Dr. Gorgonovitch, Sir, do we not have a scientist among our own nationals who can do this work? Do we have to rely on foreigners?"

"Ach," he said with disgust, shooting out bits of sardine left from his lunch. "We did have a fellow. Dr. Mausorgsk - indeed, an uncooperative man with a bad heart."

Pitrov nodded with a little shudder of understanding. "How can we be certain that Dr. Jones will cooperate?"

Gorgonovitch belched, his protuberant abdomen shook with his mirth. "I have seen a photograph of this Dr. Jones, a proper scholarly fellow with wire rimmed glasses - it will not even be a challenge."

\* \* \* \* \*

All he saw from the prone position was a giant wall of water at least 50 feet high surging upward spraying him with icy brine, freezing his eyebrows and soaking into his heavy clothing. Rapid descent in a giant shaft beneath the earth did not do much for his physiology either. He blacked out.

The procedure was simple although an engineering marvel - to escape detection the huge scientific complex had been built below a frozen lake. It occupied 200 acres beneath the surface and had multiple entries. The giant rift was perhaps the most spectacular - a giant cylinder with a piston lubricated by lake water pushed up through the frozen surface. Visitors were taken into large hatches and dropped to 250 feet below the earth. The process was wet but quick. The hole created quickly froze over and the entry could not be detected. The source of power for this wonderment was molten rock at about 1000 feet below the earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

First awareness was the chill - like he'd been stored over night in somebody's potato cellar. Then, the coarse, ungentle touch. Fingers with callouses palpated the painful spot at the base of his neck, the swollen trapezius muscle punctured by the tiny blade.

"Stop," he coughed not having spoken for over 4 days. A woman's voice commanded him in Russian, "Hold still, I am conducting an examination." She continued to slide her fingers down his back roughly pushing and prodding the fingers kept working their way downward. "Hey, Lady," he said in fair Russian, "I was stabbed in the shoulder not the hind end." The Doctor laughed, her voice was sort of melodic and light. "You do not speak Russian so well. Relax, I was told to examine so I examine - to be sure nothing is broken." Her hands continued downward. She squeezed his thighs and calves and grasped and rotated his feet.

"I am freezing Doctor. Can't I have a blanket?" he spoke falteringly.

"Certainly, American," she slapped him vigorously across the backside and flipped a heavy itchy coverlet over him.

"So far you are a fine specimen, the puncture missed your lung by a mile - just a little infection - a little probing will take care of that and then I can work on your lovely face."

He missed most of what she said but could not move since his captors had taken the precaution to strap him to the table. He twitched and poured forth as many Russian obscenities as he could muster as she scrubbed and probed. She worked methodically but fast.

"You called me a pig-eyed bed spring but I will forgive you." she said matter of factly.

Within minutes she had dressed the wound with black ointment that smelled like dead fish, released his straps and flipped him over with practiced ease.

He displayed his twisted grin tentatively and tried to focus on her face which danced about unclearly. "I can't see up close very well without my glasses", he admitted.

She grasped his head with her vise-like fingers. "Three days growth and an ugly cut. It is almost healed. So stabbed and clunked on the head, you were. Someone doesn't like you?!!

"I hit my head on...on..." he could not think of the word for a few seconds, "...a urinal." She seemed truly amused laughing as she pulled up a stool.

"Just a little scrubbing and some ointment will take care of this." she said.

He looked at her very seriously, "I certainly hope that there will not be a scar." She frowned at first and then noticed the crooked nose and scar and his chin.

"Oh, not to worry," she laughed as she cleaned the cut, "you will be as beautiful as before when I am done."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jane Harrington-Smith, herpetologist, graduate Summa Cum Laude of Amhurst College loved snakes. A slender, pale girl with large brown eyes, she looked like a preacher's daughter.

Yet this frail looking creature beat around the bush pouncing on scaley, slimey slithering creatures at every opportunity. She was one of the few persons on record to have survived the attack of a black mamba. Being a shy reserved person she of course, claimed that the snake that had bitten her must

have recently eaten and therefore was low on venom. Nobody really believed that.

Snakes were her life. Love of snakes is sensual, erotic, and dangerous. The Garden of Eden thing and all. Jane was all business, though. With her hair tightly knotted to keep it out of the way she milked snakes for venom, bagged snakes for shipping to zoos, collected rare varieties for universities and slept with three very large anacondas who enjoyed her body heat.

Presently she was studying the strange religious practices of the Holiness Church of Safe Haven, Tennessee. She was fascinated, indeed, drawn to their religious services and could pass snakes with the best. She never missed one of the meetings and was planning to stay at least six months with these fundamentalist folks.

Unknown to this fair young woman the caves where she loved to stomp about seeking out rattlers had a connection to the underground complex in Russia where Indy Jones was at the mercy of a mad scientist and nymphomaniac physician.

The connection was an underground river, a river which flowed with amazing rapidity. Subterranean transportation was accomplished in insulated life-support "eggs". The river formed periodic pools where the units popped up in underground caves. One of these was located in the caves on the outskirts of Safe Haven.

A small group of Russian scientists serving in satellite technical positions were present in the community. They posed as farmers and told the locals that they were Finns.

\* \* \* \* \*

McDuff was weighted down by the sack filled with the thirteen spiders. As he entered the lab about 10:30 p.m. he was surprised by the same young woman whose proclivities with the stiletto had such a disastrous effect on Indiana. Deftly she stepped behind him and inserted the blade into the muscle at the base of his neck. He ripped her cloak as he fell. Two henchmen who wore the same type of dark robes carried him off. The archaeologist was no light weight. He stood six-six and tipped the scales at two hundred and thirty. The sack with the spiders was cast aside and he was hauled away.

In seven hours he awoke, smelling salt air mingled with fish odor. His stomach told him he was at sea. He hated water and always flew.

"What a stupid way to travel," he muttered. He was really surprised when a muffled voice answered, "Sure is."

McDuff was securely tied but was able to log roll in the direction of the voice. "My God, they've kidnapped a child," he shrieked as he looked at the co-inhabitant of the ship's hold.

"Child, my ass," the small person said, "I just happen to be a famous geologist who is short. The name is Max Diedera...Professor Diedera U.C.L.A. This is a pisser, isn't it?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Carrying a small leather book and swinging a shoulder purse the plump young girl ambled along. Her bobbed red hair glowed coppery under the dim lights of "fraternity lane".

A typical coed, she had been doing research at the college library on rare poisons, an interest of hers. Seemingly deep in thought she strolled slowly towards her dormitory. Following a constant twenty yards behind her, a tall sinister figure skirted the shadows gliding behind trees, his eyes darting about quickly to observe for any sign of others along the path. It was late and they were alone. As his prey neared her living quarters the distance between them lessened. There was no doubt that this young flesh was vulner-

able. Thoughts of the perverted acts he would commit upon her tender body racked his frame, he inhaled deeply and closed the distance between them. Grabbing her hair he pulled her close. "I'm going to rape you, bitch," he hissed with foul, fishy breath. He held a long hunting knife to her neck. Seconds later he was falling to the ground to die an agonizing death. His throat was cut by an extremely sharp razor wielded so quickly that he could not defend against it. The girl flicked his hand from her hair as he fell. Without looking back she proceeded to the dormitory. Not even a drop of his blood touched her - all of it was gushing out on the growth of young spring grass. She took a deep breath savoring the sweet night air. From her purse she withdrew a lace handkerchief and wiped the razor lovingly. Then she placed it back in the sheath at her left wrist. The razor was only her third favorite weapon but it was a handy gadget. Humming happily she withdrew a large nugget of foil wrapped French chocolate. With delicate fingers, unstained by her assailant's blood, she unwrapped the candy and popped it into her mouth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jones, five days growth on his face, sat tied tightly to a wooden chair. Sick and shivering with cold he nevertheless glared at the monstrous face of the evil Dr. Gorgonovitch.

"I don't know where I am," Jones snarled, "and I don't know why I am here, but if you would kindly untie me I would happily tear off the rest of your face."

"You speak terrible Russian, Jones," the horrible man spewed out so that large flecks of spittle landed on Jones' naked chest and face. "You must know, however, DOCTOR Jones that I will not tolerate your ill mannered ways. You will learn obedience quickly." He strode towards his captive and kicked him hard in the left knee and then brought a hard fist down on his collarbone.

Jones collapsed forward and vomited with enough force to spray his Russian lunch all over his tormentor's boots.

Enraged, Gorgonovitch was about to step in and strike him again when Pitrov moved in between them, certainly a courageous act.

"Doctor, Doctor," he reprimanded, "remember, the last case? He is no good to us dead."

Shaking with rage, his fists clenched, he relented. Gorgonovitch was malevolent but no fool. He knew that he had to use Jones and could not let his rotten temper interfere with his mission. After all destroying the United States, Great Britain, France, and all of their lesser allies was a goal of supreme import.

"Bring in the female Doctor," he growled, "we will use the arsenal of fine drugs we have at our disposal. Jones will be a sniveling ruin but he will do what we ask."

Marfa came in looking fearfully about. When she saw Jones she gasped. Gorgonovitch slapped her hard across the face. "Pull yourself together Doctor. You have important work to do for Mother Russia. We must get this fellow to comply, eh. You will use torpedol and if that fails ictythyline-X."

"But Sir," she shuddered, "he is too sick, he might die."

"You are a skilled Doctor, that is why you are here. You will obey and make certain he does not die," he said. "Your failure could mean Siberia."

"Ha." the large woman said petulently. "That is where I am from, Siberia holds no threat."

Gorgonovitch looked at her with disbelief at her insolence. Then the humor struck him. He laughed until tears rolled out of his only eye. He



slapped his thigh. A man of intense emotions, he always appreciated a good joke.

"For now, young Doctor, take care of his bruises," he said, "make him comfortable. I expect word of the cylinders within the next several days. Then we can get to work and extract our due from this wretching American!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"You are late with your report comrade", the wireless crackled in code.

"Sorry Sir, I had a brief encounter with a rapist," she tapped back.

"Poor fellow," was the return. "Now to business. We are in need of a chemical engineer and paleontologist. Tomorrow you will go to the University of Chicago. Your target is Doctor Andrew Highgan. Then on to Washington University where you will obtain Dr. Marinda Phillips, over."

"Understood, Sir." was the terse response.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not pleased with current events, Jones surveyed his present condition, at least he was not tied - just locked in a cell. His knee was emitting dull throbs - not bad - but his collarbone was decidedly broken. Most of the effects of the stiletto poison had dissipated - sore - cold - but worst of all no snap-brim and no bullwhip. The facial hair felt about right though. It really did feel good not to be tied.

Something had already told him he was in Russia - but Russia was an awfully large place - so it was sort of like deciding between Seattle and Key West. He was sure that a heavy plot was afoot. The politics were fuzzy, but he was fairly certain Russia was an ally at the moment. So an independent operation by fanatics was probably a good guess - very unclear was how he, as a scholar and occasional grave robber, fit into the picture. What was all this stuff about obedience? They obviously need his talents - but for what?

Dr. Nosgrofov entered the cell, medical bag in hand.

Jones prepared mentally to submit to her coarse touch. The collarbone had to be treated to heal properly. The good Doctor also had other types of submissions in mind.

"So you are again in need of treatment. Dr. Jones," she said softly as she put down her bag, "a most abused man you are. But fear not I will take care of you."

She gently applied the tight figure-eight bandage to secure the collarbone. Once stabilized the pain was not too bad. Again she palpated all his parts but her touch was so much more gentle. She seemed to droop down upon him, her heavy breasts resting against his chest. Boticelli came to his mind.

No doubt he was becoming warmer...and warmer. She massaged and caressed. Carefully her lips descended upon his forehead then to his cheek and at last to his lips. She suddenly had a frenzy about her. Her touch became more intimate more demanding. Jones fought off arousal but it did no good.

She whispered in his ear, being careful not to put much pressure upon his chest. "You are so beautiful, so powerful. When I am afraid and believe me, I am terrified, I need a man. I must have you...you will submit."

Jones had been in strange love making situations - even had participated in a couple of orgies but he had always been the aggressor. This was different - scary- but pleasant. Actually the most pleasant experience he had had all week. He took a painful deep breath and concentrated on relaxing. She could work for what she wanted...and she was good at her work.

\* \* \* \* \*

Huge and glistening the cylinders stood tall in the underground room. Each was a different color. Most strange was their lack of clear definition.

The form was there but indistinct, fluid. To stare at them caused headaches as was attested to by the complaints of technicians. Fortunately no harmful radiation was emitted, at least, none that could be monitored. These cylinders were different than the first. It was earthbound - marble-like, gray and hard - loaded with easy to see, hard to read symbols. The others were not of this earth by any standard. If symbols were present they were obscured by the fluidity of the surfaces.

Jones stood surrounded by four guards looking at the pillars. Chills ran up and down his spine. He could feel the alien presence. Immediately the challenge they presented loomed up. He knew now why he was here. He was to crack their code, to solve their mysteries. But he was being asked to do this for the bad guys...hence the rub. Jones certainly was no purist but he had his allegiances.

He had to solve the riddle of the columns and to somehow keep this knowledge from his captors. He just knew they were up to no good. Not yet privy to the information of the first column he did not know how critical the situation was. He surmised that it was some sort of money-making scheme. Certainly he did not suspect these mad Russians were planning to command molten lava and to use it to take over the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hours passed as he examined every inch of the gray cylinder, taking notes and referring to the additional old bark manuscripts he had been given. They alluded to the column and its purpose as the key to the others but did not contain much useful information. They had been written as late as the 700 century A.D. probably an attempt to retain knowledge that had been passed verbally through a hundred generations. Cult came to mind as he thought about the girl in the strange robe. Some sort of religious offshoot he could not quite get a handle on - really obscure - definitely of Russian origin. He was glad that he could understand the code on the cylinder better than he could speak Russian. Surprisingly it resembled hieroglyphics - he remembered all the good times he had had translating the Book of the Dead. This stuff was far more sophisticated yet allusions to conditions and history made it distinctly pre-Egyptian. It was an engineering text to indicate how the other cylinders could be placed in strategic locations on earth and activated either regionally or globally to divert volcanic action.

Where were these when they needed them at Pompeii? he reflected. Protected by an obscure cult in Russia with ancient connections to extra-terrestrial intelligence. he answered himself.

Understanding the glyphs on the column was like peeling away the skin of an onion the more skin the more tears. His eyes burned from the strain of this fiery work. He had made quantum leaps past the rudimentary notes Dr. Gorgonovitch had ordered him to use.

He burned with the need to pursue this knowledge, he was exhausted and wondering how he could escape being drugged by Gorgonovitch if the mad Doctor suspected in the least that he was withholding information. Hell, he thought, they don't need drugs, just one tiny garden snake held to my face and I would be a drooling idiot. He suppressed the thought not wanting to think about what they could do to him if they realized his weakness.

\* \* \* \* \*

The two professors had become fast friends lying there together in the stinking hold. Of different disciplines they had never met in academic circles. Now Jock told about the thirteen spiders and the dangers he had faced to get

them out of the jungle. Diminutive Max Diederer recounted that his interest in geology had been kindled when he was in high school. Their class had gone to some mining caves with an over zealous science teacher. A cave-in from all the noise they had made blocked their escape. Only he was small enough to wiggle through a minute opening. Scrapped and bruised, but a local hero, his life changed forever. He vowed he would spend his life exploring caves. Every summer he and his students did.

The chugging of the tanker engines suddenly stopped. Four rough looking types hauled the two scientists out of the hold and shoved them roughly into a life boat. In minutes they were in the cargo area of a large seaplane.

"Not much of a view," Diederer commented from his face down position.

"I am going to change travel agents," McDuff laughed. The problem was getting serious. He really had to go to the bathroom. Humanely the kidnappers released them soon after take off. It was great just to sit upright. The plane was well appointed but the cargo area wasn't much. Better a plane than a boat with all its pitching and rocking. McDuff thought until they hit turbulence and dropped about five hundred feet in just seconds. The flight was long and made worse by McDuff's airsickness. The second night was falling as they approached their destination. In the orange glow of sunset Mauna Loa and Kilauea loomed up blackly as the plane skittered into a sheltered south-east cove and the engines diminished to a quiet purr.

They looked at each other and shrugged. Neither had any inkling as to why they had been selected for a Hawaiian vacation.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Aren't you afraid your superiors will frown on your behavior towards a prisoner?" Jones asked as he enjoyed Marfa's caresses.

"Ha," she replied, "we Russians are not so inhibited by sexual matters as you Americans. As long as I do my job there will be no problem."

"And your job is to be the instrument of my compliance," he sneered, "to patch me up to keep me going and then use whatever noxious drugs they order you to use if I am a bit recalcitrant about telling them what I know."

She dug her nails into his chest in anger. "What do you think that I do this for...Sunday pleasure? They told me what they would do to my mother and father if I did not fully cooperate...terrible things can be done to the human body with just a few simple tools." Shuddering she laid her head on his chest. She wept for a long time.

He stroked her shoulders and held her as best he could in his bandaged up condition. They were nothing but pawns in a game with a lot of overgrown knights, bishops and queens. No plan entered his head. He just stared at the ceiling while his companion soaked his skin and bedding with her tears.

\* \* \* \* \*

Claxons sounded as Jones was scrutinizing a small obscure segment at the very bottom of the stone column. His captors had graciously provided him with a pair of spectacles that were close to his prescription. With the additional aid of a magnifying lens he was on his hands and knees scrutinizing the symbols which were giving him trouble. He panted with exertion.

The alarm startled him so that he pitched forward bumping his nose on the cold stone. His glasses flipped off and cracked. He muttered a few Latin phrases and fumbled for them. The cement floor began to rumble beneath his feet, then to crack. Huge hunks upended themselves. Jones was in the cell alone with only the column for company. Now that was rocking precariously on its base. He estimated that it weighed 1200 lbs and was 8 feet tall. He thought fleet-

ingly about trying to catch it as it toppled but quickly decided he was no match for it. It listed and rocked before it crashed to the fractured floor. Jones watched in horror as it broke into hundreds of pieces. The impact of this priceless object being destroyed before his eyes brought tears. He screamed in anguish for the loss of the ancient artifact, but his grief was short lived. Molten lava began to bubble up through the large crack in the center of the cell. Noxious gases: sulphur dioxide, chlorine and carbon monoxide among them plus plenty of steam blew out of the rift. It was a little fuzzy without his glasses but it was obviously a cone. A miniature volcano was rapidly forming. Lava, red hot and menacing crept over the rim. Ashes shot into the air and spattered on the ceiling. The cell was only 15' x 15'. It was getting very hot and crowded. The cone grew and Indy was forced towards the door by the advancing molten rock. It was extremely hot now. Indy jumped up on the door grasping the bars with his good arm, his feet squeezed in between the bars...barely. He hung like a chimpanzee shrieking, "Get me out of here, you goddamn bastards," at the top of his lungs. There was a lot of running and shrieking in the corridor, too. The cell was filling up with lava rapidly - there was no floor free of the hot stuff. It was two feet deep. The cone was almost to the ceiling, about ten feet. The ceiling started to collapse. The lava lapped against his pants cuffs. The room was about 140 degrees. He figured he was done for. Lava was running under the door. He was starting to black out. As his pants caught fire the cell door miraculously flew open and he swung into the corridor. Gratefully he leapt free barely missing the lava accumulating in the corridor.

The situation outside the cell wasn't any too good either. He ripped off his pants and started to run in the direction with the fewest number of volcanic cones thrusting up through the cracked cement. The going was rough. Several times he was thrown to the ground as a chunk of the floor thrust upward.

Someone had obviously meddled with the alien columns. Jones had enough knowledge to realize that they were capable of awesome destruction.

As suddenly as it began the chaos stopped abruptly. Lava moved more slowly and the ashes began to settle. As Jones entered a large assembly room he spotted Pitrov looking about desperately.

"You know what in hell happened?" Jones demanded.

"It was terrible," Pitrov stuttered, "one of the workmen touched two of the columns at the same time. Poof, he just melted. It was terrible, just a pile of ashes. Then from the base of each tiny cracks appeared, then the floor opened up and the volcanoes began to crop up in lines that radiated in all directions. I don't know how many have died."

"Handle with care," Jones muttered as he surveyed the destruction.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pitrov was obviously dazed. The noise and confusion in the complex continued after the man-made volcanic activity ceased. Jones looked about quickly calculating that he could escape. He was working through a serious dilemma. He wanted to stay and continue the research, after all he was the resident expert on the volcano maker - particularly now since the gray column was in pieces under at least 10 tons of lava. He had most of it committed to memory. The basic process that had occurred was that the workman who made contact between the two columns had created an energy field that had diverted magma, in this case, literally sucked it up from thousands of feet below the earth and had channeled it up through the concrete floor of the complex. And this was just a small event. When the workman's body cinderized contact was broken



and the phenomenon ceased.

Important safety tip: don't touch two columns at the same time.

If he escaped he would prevent these evil types from taking over vast parts of the civilized world...at least temporarily...but chances were, that with their resources, they would capture him again unless he went underground and it was hard to teach university classes that way. On the other hand, he had no pants and was clad only in a light wool shirt and boxer shorts. Outside it was 30 degrees below or colder. The question of escape was moot. He'd not even make it ten feet without adequate preparation. Then, of course, the other contingencies were finding the exits. He made a mental list of survival supplies as he worked his way through the corridor: boots, snow shoes, heavy pants, parka, gloves, dog sled, dogs, sure, he thought, they just have teams of dogs awaiting some escapee's beck and call.

The layout of the place was crazy, concentric rings around a large intake area with the hydraulic shaft to the surface. Corridors also radiated from this center, bisecting the circles. After a few circuits Jones sensed that the circular corridors were getting smaller. At the next intersection he headed inward.

He didn't want to escape to the outside. Perhaps there was another way. As he approached the inner area he spotted a room which looked inviting. The door was clearly labeled: Water Transport.

Slowly the heavy door creaked open under his cautious touch. Bobbing like an apple in a large pool there was an egg shaped bathisphere with the hatch flipped open. Jones assumed that it had been left that way when the alarm had sounded.

He jumped on board almost slipping off as it rocked violently under his weight. He slid down into the cockpit. Opting to leave the hatch open he began to look over the controls. There were switches and buttons all over the place. He spotted the one marked "ballast". Others included life support, batteries, depth sounder and radio. He climbed the two rungged ladder to close the hatch just as an angry Russian fired a large caliber bullet into the cockpit. It ricocheted a good ten seconds. Jones pulled the hatch closed before the guard fired again. Water rushed into the tanks as he hit the ballast control. Sinking slowly at first the craft came to rest with a metallic clink. Jones looked at the board again. There was a "gate" button. When he pushed it the opening into the main water tunnel slid open. The craft was sucked with great force into the main stream. He was pressed against the bulkhead as it somersaulted along. He worked his way over to the seat and after a few difficult tries managed to get in and strap himself down. This was not transportation for sissys.

Breath searing through his lungs he lolled his head back. To his horror he saw water seeping in...very slowly...but insistentlly. He looked at the board again, and after some frantic searching found the stabilizer control. He could not get it adjusted right but it helped a little. Then he carefully unbuckled the safety harness and worked his way to the hatch. Water spun out from its rim. He tried to tighten it down but it was impossible. He crawled back to his seat and had a devil of a time strapping back in. His collar bone felt like it had been pulverized. The pain was sharp and unrelenting. His heart pounded loudly. Gasping for air he realized he hadn't activated life support. He pulled the lever and blacked out.

Slowly accumulating water soaked through his leather boots. He picked up his feet instinctively. The water was about a foot deep. He had no idea how

long he would be tumbling through this water tube. Drowning in this contraption was not a bit appealing. He could do nothing so he forced himself to relax and continue to study the situation. There was a metal cabinet on the console. Inside there were two bottles of vodka. Snatching one up he took a big gulp of the clear liquid. After gagging and choking he took another gulp. It warmed his feet. At least, he would die happy.

He decided to ration the alcohol in case he should have the opportunity to exit the capsule. Just enough passed his lips to keep warm - the water was terribly cold and up to his knees. He guessed that he had been traveling at least two hours.

The instruments danced before his eyes. He had trouble focusing. Every few minutes he lost consciousness only to awaken with a start when the cold water crept to a new mark.

When the water reached his shoulders he knew he had to release himself. Vodka in hand he swirled around at the mercy of the rushing water. Grabbing the short ladder, he took one final drink and the bottle slipped from his hand. Numb with cold, the last thing he remembered was floating with his face to the hatch with only an inch or so of air space remaining.

\* \* \* \* \*

An amazing engineering feat, over four thousand years old, the tunnel was coated with a substance which effectively resisted erosion. The system was operated by the earth's rotation. As Jones floated close to death from drowning the "egg" containing him was nearing its destination, Safe Haven, Tennessee. Hundreds of these tunnels formed arteries for the earth. Traveling over twelve hundred miles per hour the vehicle shot into the first mesh net. Shaped like a wind sock, the net slowed the object but did not stop it. A series of these reduced its speed sufficiently to allow it to contact the gate without damage. This bump opened the gate automatically and the capsule then blew its ballast and started upwards into the underground pool.

Jane was taking a drink from the clear pool after a successful snake hunt including three varieties of rattlers that were extremely rare.

As she drank she became aware of the large dark object looming up through the clear water illuminated by the light on her hard hat. She shrieked a little. It popped to the surface. Immediately seeing that it was man-made, not the Loch Ness Monster, she hopped on board and twisted open the hatch. It had been touch and go that the capsule should even float due to its water logged condition and her tiny weight was enough to cause it to start to sink.

Seeing Jones' bearded face, his skin colorless with cold, was her second shock of the day. She grabbed his hair and pulled him out slowly. He was dead weight but she was used to pulling recalcitrant snakes out of their hiding places in rocks.

They both fell into the water and she continued to clutch his hair and easily dragged him to the edge of the pool. Breathing heavily she stripped off their clothes and wrapped up with him in the blanket from her pack.

Some hot coffee from her thermos tasted good as she tried to figure out how she was going to drag him out of the cave. She estimated she was at least two miles into its interior. She massaged his soggy limbs and stimulated him as best she could. Finally his teeth began to chatter and he started to groan. She kept working frantically. Within a half an hour he opened his eyes. He was shaking so violently that she had trouble keeping the blanket around them.

Moaning he turned his head and tried to focus on the large amorphous thing

that was moving and writhing just a few feet from his face.

"What's that?" he said rhetorically, not yet conscious of Jane's presence.

"Why a sack of snakes, of course," she answered as if he was a total ignorant.

He clutched at her, pushing himself as far away from the sack as possible.

Trying hard to understand this strange situation he croaked hoarsely, "Good, that's good, snakes should be in sacks. Sacks that's right." He clutched her so tightly that she shook too. "Don't let them get me, okay?" he said in a whisper. She thought he meant the snakes.

\* \* \* \* \*

If the woman had been any more colorless she would have been an albino. White-blonde hair, white eyelashes and faded blue eyes were accentuated by an electric blue suit slim at the hips and embellished with shoulder pads that jutted out from her small shoulders. Her Robin Hood style chapeau decorated with a peacock feather tilted jauntily to the left side of her head. "Greetings, Doctors," she spoke in perfect English. The two scientists, looking perfectly dreadful and disheveled, were shoved along by two husky guards. She wrinkled her nose in distaste.

In rapid fire Russian she told the guards to take them away and to bring them back only when they were scrubbed clean.

In less than a half hour the pair were shaved, bathed and clothed in stiff but spotless coveralls. Max grumbled because his cuffs and sleeves had to be rolled up and kept sliding down.

The blue and white Queen glared arrogantly upon their return. "Well gentlemen, now we can get down to business. You, Dr. McDuff will be communicating with Dr. Indiana Jones as to his findings. You Dr. Diederer will begin a complete geological survey."

McDuff looked puzzled. "Ah, yes," the evil lady said, "I had forgotten that you know nothing of our little plan. We have located ancient technology capable of diverting or creating volcanic activities. Your Jones is in northernmost Siberia studying the artifacts to learn how they are to be used." She paused and inhaled deeply from a strong Turkish cigarette in a diamond studded holder.

Smoke billowed around her face as she continued. "You two will be responsible for setting up the first large scale experiment. We will use the easily accessible Mauna Loa and divert her energies to blow California and perhaps bits of Washington and Oregon into the ocean." she coughed and waved the smoke away from her face.

Diederer summoned all his height, "And what if we refuse to cooperate?"

Zvetkya laughed. "A bullet in the brain and then shark bait, perhaps... or the drugs. In your case we have gone to a lot of trouble to obtain your services...so it will probably be the drugs. We can arrange your complete obedience, use your intellect and leave you a sniveling vegetable if we so desire."

They suspected that she offered no idle threat. Rumor had been floating about that the Russians had drugs which could make a man do almost anything from murdering his own mother to violating moral standards implanted in early childhood.

McDuff hated to take even an aspirin: the thought of foreign substances coursing through his veins terrified him...he was an archaeologist, not a hero. Diederer laughed. The entire scenario seemed utterly ridiculous. He had been in the Fields of France during the Great War. He had a steel plate in his

head. Once in his lab a large ferrous rock, precariously placed on a shelf was attracted to the plate and fell clunking him severely. Since that time the sight of a ferrous rock recalled the burning flesh and the screams of the dying. Living with that kind of problem, still pursuing his career as a geologist made him strong. He was already plotting their escape. Of course, it was only the plot outline but it was a beginning.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even in the spring the caves were quite cold. Wrapped up in a blanket with an incoherent, naked man with no hope of dry clothing, snakes at home needing to be milked... the situation sucked to be blunt. The guy had a hairy face...not soft and nice but stubbly and he insisted on pressing his head to her bare chest.

She had just about made up her mind that she was going to put on her wet duds and leave the guy...taking her snakes, of course...and truck out to get some help. Just as she started to pull on her underwear, the sound of a small engine startled her. Looking up she saw two men that she recognized as a couple of the "Finn" farmers coming towards them riding a little tractor. She was so glad to see someone that she didn't even think it was strange that they were in the cave or that they didn't seem surprised by the "egg" floating in the pool.

In actuality they were there to meet the arrival of the egg traveler since it had signaled them automatically when it bumped the gate.

They realized this was no one they had ever worked with before but played it straight, silently helping the shivering young snake lady to load both Jones and her snakes into the tractor wagon.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jones felt warm for the first time in years. He was floating and comfortably avoiding consciousness. The only thing that bothered him was the heaviness in his chest and the feeling that his legs were encoiled. He wanted to turn onto his side but he couldn't. He squirmed and his legs were squeezed... by something. There was rippling against his skin...the circulation was leaving his lower limbs.

He snapped open his eyes...and looked into the ugliest face he had ever seen. The snake's head was an inch from his face. Its' tongue flicked out and lashed his nose.

The screech that he emitted brought Jane and several members of the Holiness church; who were visiting. He could not move. His cries had frightened the snake and it had reared up and was hissing, mouth agape.

"Why, how did the boys get in here, the little devils," she said innocently. "I'm so sorry...I know some folks are just terrified of snakes."

She reached down and plucked Hector the naughty anaconda from Jones' chest. He was soaked in sweat and completely incoherent.

"And those other two," she said, "I'll just bet I know where they are." She threw back the covers and the two smaller snakes blinked up at her. Each one was wrapped around a leg, so tightly that his feet were blanched white. Jane and her guests tenderly unwrapped the creatures while Jones was completely hysterical. One of the men had to hold his shoulders so that he could be divested of his reptilian friends without throwing himself out of bed.

Jane herself, restrained and soothed him while he sobbed and heaved. It took at least ten minutes before he was able to speak.

"I, I, I...don't...don't...like s...s...sna...snakes," he stammered.

"Well, good Lord, that's obvious," Jane retorted as if that was a grievous sin. "Who are you, anyway...popping up like a little bobber in a



capsule filled up with water...you got a death wish or something?"

"I...I...am Dr. Indiana...Jones," he said carefully. "Pro...professor of archaeology at a respectable american university and you...you...I... presume are...Eve."

Jane looked at him blankly. "That's not a bit funny Dr. Jones. I am Dr. Jane Harrington-Smith professor of herpetology at New York University. I am here in Safe Haven, Tennessee on sabbatical to live with the members of and study the Holiness Church."

"Where, where are we?" Jones asked.

"Safe Haven, Tennessee." she repeated.

"Strange, a short time ago I was in the men's bathroom in the archaeology building. After being assaulted by a knife wielding coed I woke up some where in Russia...now I've been bedded with...with," (he shuddered violently) "snakes in Tennessee. What is the world coming to?"

Jones was feeling better already. His clavicle was bad, but that was to be expected. Many persons would have been sheepish if they had put on the display of histrionics he had just exhibited. Jones did not feel the least upset about it. He was tough and rugged but when he was terrified he did not give a shit who knew about it. He had no macho tendencies whatever. The bottom line was that not much terrified him except snakes. It was something he wished he could overcome.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was up by that afternoon. The weather was warm and pleasant. Exploration was in order, carefully, to avoid Hector, Victor and Sam, who seemed to delight in slithering by and giving Jones a panic attack. He'd already sat on one of the creatures at lunch so he was being very careful. After all he was a guest here.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gorgonovitch was furious. Stupidity was the cause of all this. He had warned the technicians not to tamper with the columns...certainly not to touch them bare-handed. Now the complex was a shambles and Jones, the key to this operation, had escaped. At least he knew where he was. The capsule he'd stolen only went to one place.

His communications personnel had already contacted the section chief in Tennessee. After a brief explanation the order was given to return Jones per the underground water way with two guards: ALIVE with no injuries. His knowledge was vital to the plan.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jones had to R and R for the day. The local doctor, quite a cranky old man, had rewrapped his clavicle and told him that he should stay out of bar fights. Jones planned on getting out of this snake infested place the next morning. While he could not speak Russian well he could certainly understand it. He knew that the "Finn Farmers" were not Finns.

Again he was having to make up a list of supplies - high leather boots, protective clothing, hat, bull whip.... He did not think he would get into anything of Jane's. He thought she was exactly what she said she was...and a cocky bitch at that...but never the less he was wary. He knew Gorgonovitch would be after him soon. Being downed by the secretive stilleto or something equally obnoxious was not a bit appealing. Gorgonovitch had probably contacted his partners here and they would try to get him back to Russia.

He decided the best method of escape was to borrow Jane's truck...without her knowledge, of course.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I've been thinking about your problem with snakes," Jane said as she unbuttoned her blouse and let it slip to the floor. The field trousers were next. Jones just stood and looked at her.

"Fear of snakes is obviously fear of sex, clear as a Rorschach," she continued. Her bra was on the floor and she was slipping out of her panties. She stepped forward and scrutinized him. "I know you academic types...nose in dusty volumes...you'd rather do research than take a girl out. God...you're not a virgin are you?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Three a.m. came early. Jones disengaged himself from the snake lady. Their lovemaking had been raucous, writhing...passionate. It had been difficult at first because he kept thinking, Lips that kiss snakes will never kiss mine. He got over that. She pulsed and undulated exciting parts of his body he had not even thought about. He melted under her touch. She never hurt him even though he was bruised and broken. Her tongue flicked into orifices which cried for more. She squeezed, she licked, she bit his ears, his neck, and other parts which caused him to roar with pleasure.

After all that he hated to steal her truck. Even in the heat of passion he managed to take the keys from her bedside table.

He was tired, too tired for all this but he had to get away. He did not want to expose Jane to any unnecessary danger. These were real bad guys. He knew they wanted to take him alive...he knew they would use the drugs when they caught him.

Shimmying and rumbling the truck rolled down the rutted dirt drive. A dog barked, he jumped. Fatigue crept up behind his eyes. He had no idea where he was going. At least there was plenty of gas. He squinted into the dark, a skunk ran across the road; he swerved to miss. The truck bounced off the road into a shallow ditch. Muddy water plopped against the windshield. Blindly he wrenched on the wheel trying to get back on the road. The heavy vehicle rocked precariously but made it back on track. The offended skunk scampered off into the woods, but he had left his mark.

Windshield wipers worked over time. Jones squinted and drove on as fast as he dared. The oily stench of musk penetrated the cab. He gagged but kept driving.

Looking up he saw lights in his rear view mirror. They were closing in fast. Don't get melodramatic, he thought, just a couple of young people going home after some fun at lover's lane. The lights got very close. He changed his mind. The "Finns" were after him. He punched down on the accelerator. The boots he found in the barn pinched his toes.

Roaring ahead the peppy truck put some distance between them.

At a tight curve he ran off the road and through a pasture fence.

The Russians missed that and roared on. Just like one of those talkies, bad plot, poor action, stupid villains.

He sat listening to his own heart thudding rapidly...still, happily intact and secure in his chest.

The huge bull slammed into the drivers door throwing Indy to the other side of the cab. Enraged, the creature slammed into the truck again rocking it dangerously. Jones took the hint and exited out the passenger door. On the third run the bull flipped his head upwards ripping the door off its hinges. Jane would not be pleased.

Six curious cows gathered around bumping and nudging him as he staggered

around in the dark. There were other things in the pasture. Squishy things that were there for him to put his hands into.

The bull, bored by demolishing the truck galloped around to see what his ladies were up to. Jones dashed across the pasture. His feet burned from the too small boots.

The next thing he knew he was up in a tree. The angry beef slammed into the trunk but decided that it was not much fun. He returned to grazing just below the branch where Jones was perched.

The Russian would find the truck at dawn. If he was still in the tree it would not be long before he was on the way to the frozen North. Still, being here on this black night with millions of stars peppering the sky was peaceful. The smell of manure wafted upwards. He relaxed against the truck, feeling confident that no night creeping snakes would be hanging about. Something was bothering him about the pillars. When he was not thinking about running for his life he thought about their awesome potential for the destruction of the earth. He needed to transcribe his knowledge derived from the now destroyed stone pillar...he was the key now. He was the pillar...he hoped this terrible responsibility would not turn him to stone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jane awoke to find Jones gone. She knew that if she was going to continue to lead him down the path of sexual fulfillment that she would have to follow him where ever he went. It was obvious that his inhibitions were deep rooted and that he was inexperienced in sexual matters. Reciting Julius Caesar in Latin while writing in orgasmic ecstasy was a clue to need to be ripped from the clutches of academia. Her work was laid out by divine plan. The poor man is probably in the living room sitting sleepless due to sexual remorse, she reasoned, I am sure I can help him through this night.

A thorough search of the house proved her wrong. She even looked in the woodshed. It was then she saw the muddy tracks and realized her truck was gone.

Oh, this is far worse than I thought, she reprimanded herself. I should have known that he would run away. After all, losing ones virginity can be frightening.

Dawn was breaking as she saddled her favorite horse, a pig-eyed paint with a wide white patch that encircled his tail like a toilet seat. This old horse would go anywhere. She easily followed the tracks to the field. She let out a little shriek when she saw the destroyed condition of her truck...a vehicle paid for with blood, sweat and snake venom. She scanned the field looking for Indy. Through the early morning mist she could see Indy's feet dangling down with his keeper grazing sedately below.

Hooting and yelling she drove the bull away. The old paint loved to chase cattle so it was an easy job.

Glad to be free of the bull, Jones surprised her by leaping up behind her on the back of the sturdy horse.

"Let's get the hell out of here, Doll. There are some really nasty guys after me. I don't want you to get hurt."

"What's the matter, Indy?" she said tauntingly, "You have some books over due at the library?"

"No, Jane, it's a long...well, some Russians who want to blow up the world are after me because I am the only one with the knowledge to do it...okay?"

He grasped her waist more tightly as she turned in the saddle almost falling off. "You must be kidding!" she said flatly, "or you are completely psychotic."

They skidded to a halt at the truck. It was obvious that they would never get it out of the mud. It had sunk to its axles.

The Russians appeared at that very moment running and shouting to stop. They had orders not to kill. That frustrated them but they were sure they could outrun the overburdened horse. They were wrong.

Loping along easily the pair outdistanced the Russians and disappeared into the woods. Splashing about a mile downstream in a lazy creek they lost them for sure.

"So what do we do now Pocahantas?" Jones chided as they slowed to an easy walk.

"We'll just go visit Brother Abraham up in the hills. He's a friend of mine."

"One of those weird snake worshippers you hang around with?" Jones asked suspiciously.

"They don't worship snakes. They use them in pursuing their christianity as an act of faith," she snorted as if everyone should know that.

"I hate snakes!" Jones said simply.

"I've noticed," she retorted, "a sure sign of stunted sexual development."

He rolled his eyes and grinned to himself. What a la-la this one was.

Abraham was feeding his chickens as they rode up. His wife was pumping water for breakfast and three bright faced boys played with puppies in the yard. They all looked up. They never had visitors. They only saw other folks at Church and for special occasions such as funerals.

"Brother Abraham, we need help," she called as she jumped off the horse. Jones hopped off easily but grimaced in pain as the landing jolted his shoulder.

Abraham did not understand this city woman but he respected her talent with snakes...certainly a gift from God. She had been at every service for the past six weeks. The reptiles caused her no fear. She was obviously pure of heart and without sin.

"Evil, godless men are chasing us, Abraham. Russians," she explained.

Just the mention of those devil foreigners brought his hackles up. "I'll help ya, never fear. You can stay as long as ya like. Nobody ever comes up this way."

Jones was grateful for warm coffee, stew and a bed. Thankfully, prudence declared that Jane should room with the women. Every particle of his being ached. He fell into a dreamless sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Jane, I've got to have some paper, lots of it." he told her.

She looked at him quizzically. "Isn't this a stupid time to write letters, Indiana?"

"I need to write down notes from my observations of a stone pillar which has been destroyed. I am the only one who possesses the full knowledge to control a power completely capable of destroying the earth.

Jane stopped nibbling her corn bread and looked at him as if he were completely crazed.

"I'm not crazy, Jane." he tried to convince her. "I am a reputable archaeologist...really. The Russians, at least, some weird cult of Russians, plan to use an ancient archaeological find to control volcanic action to destroy parts of the earth as they see fit. I was taken prisoner and translated the key pillar which then was destroyed by an accidental activation of the other pillars. Jane," he slammed his fist for emphasis, "Jane, I saw the power in miniature. It was awesome."

"How did they force you to translate the pillar, torture?" she asked.



Jones looked sheepish, "Well, I did it because I had to learn what the carvings on the pillars meant. It was natural curiosity. But," he shrugged, "if I hadn't done it voluntarily, they promised that they would use drugs which would have made me do exactly what they wanted plus would turn my brain to oatmeal."

"That was very unpatriotic, Indiana," she said staunchly, "If it had been me they would have had to kill me."

Jones laughed, "What they would do to you would be far worse than death. Trust me."

"So how are we going to get out of this?" she asked quietly.

"This isn't your problem, Doll," he said, "I'd suggest that you take that pony of yours and get out of here. All I need to do is get into town. I can talk to the police, call the Feds."

"Sure and wind up in the lunie bin. For God's sake, Indy you look like a vagrant. You start spouting off about pillars and volcanoes and mad Russians and you'll find yourself at Happy Hollow, that's the state hospital for the insane."

"So what do you suggest?" he asked.

"Stay here, complete your notes, if you must, even though that sounds pretty dangerous to me. Relax a little. Think. I'm sure you can come up with something."

"You're probably right, being here in the rural region I think that we'll be hard to find. But what am I going to do about paper?"

A small hand tugged at his sleeve. "Mister, mister, I can help you if you need paper." The oldest boy held up a pad of manilla drawing paper and a drawing pen.

"Great kid," Indy smiled, "you have a lot of ink?"

"Sure," the boy smiled back.

\* \* \* \* \*

Working until dawn, writing as small as he could, Jones used all the boy's writing tablet plus some letterhead Abraham's wife, Sister Thelma had provided. It was a race against time. He could only retain large tracts of data for so long and then they became fuzzy.

If he forgot something the power of the pillars would be lost for the good of mankind as well as for the detriment. As much of a risk as this was, he could not relinquish his quest to learn the full truth. After he had the symbols on paper, then he would try to make sense of them. It was imperative that every symbol be correct.

The fever induced by the frenzy of his work broke and cold sweat soaked his body. He started to shiver. He kept going by sheer will. Slowly his head dropped, and he fought to raise it. He rubbed his eyes to fight fatigue, and drank cold, bitter coffee.

Painstakingly he translated the symbols. He kept shaking his head as he realized that these were the ancestors, the precursors of Egyptian hieroglyphics. The ancient aliens had not limited themselves to the cradle of civilization.

Slowly the terrible knowledge burned itself into his brain. Here he was, a mere mortal, and he held in his grasp the potential for the destruction of mankind.

No man should have to do this, he thought, this should be reserved for the gods.

\* \* \* \* \*

Efficiently Thaxal had rounded up the scientists required for the mission. Now, relaxing in her chambers she appeared much different than she had as the coed who had killed her assailant and who had delivered Jones and others to the Russians.

Her ancestors had been on the earth for a long period of time. In the beginning they had pursued benevolent ends. As humanoids they adapted easily to the earth environment. It was not until their brain physiology was subtly altered by the presence of selenium that they began to engage in bizarre interactions with terrans. Most of the aliens died. Only a handful, genetically suited to cope with the mineral which killed so many; survived to mate with earthlings within the shelter of the Cult of which Thaxal was an important member. While very small in number their goal was to create chaos on earth with the objective that they would then select mates from the obviously superior survivors. Eliminating vast populations they would be free to expand their own group of citizens with better tolerance for selenium. While their thinking was skewed by the brain damage they sustained from the environment, they possessed marvelous skills as assassins and other criminal types.

Thaxal lived to kill and to consume large quantities of chocolate. Only sedating her victims for the good of the cult was frustrating to her but necessary.

As she relaxed the alienness that was a part of her was more obvious. She had the ability to mold her image in some ways like a chameleon. When not working her features became blank and bland - actually not features at all. When necessary her physiognomy assumed her character.

Respirations barely perceptible she considered the man Jones that she had dispatched eight days previously. She assumed that he was still alive. Sincerely hoped so, actually. He would become her mate. A perfect mate with a wonderful body and a mind unencumbered by masculine ways, thanks to the mind control drug which would certainly be required to control such a proud beast.

\* \* \* \* \*

Indiana had finally roused himself after sleeping twenty-two hours. His body ached from lack of activity and his mind was a bowl of moldy jello. Dread crept up from his gut. Here it was: another day on Mount Olympus.

He wondered how many days he could last playing a god. The fear of taking a wrong path knawed constantly. But then, that wasn't very godlike. He had trouble concentrating...he couldn't bring thoughts to any logical conclusions. Everything flooded, all in a jumble.... What did he want?...he wanted more than anything to be in his Introduction to Archaeology class on a warm day in May with flies buzzing in the windows, students nodding off and his voice droning on...and on. He realized he was not cut out for the adventurer's life. He was sure he had had enough. Rest...that was what he needed. He sighed and laid his head in his hands. He had to continue his work...he had to have the knowledge no matter how precarious...but he was terrified.

A hand touched his shoulder and he yelped.

"I'm sorry, Indy," Jane apologized, "I thought you might like some coffee."

Jones reached back and took her hand. "Sounds good, I'm foggy as hell. Maybe I should quit this quest. Maybe no man should have this knowledge."

"Knowledge is good," Jane quipped.

"But knowledge in the wrong hands...this knowledge...could mean the destruction of vast portions of civilization." he replied.

"So you have to ask: What good is to come from this," she retorted sharply. "Are you pursuing this for your own ego...just to know that you would be the ONLY one with this power over humanity or do you see some useful...I mean truly

beneficial outcome?"

"I don't know about the positive aspects, Jane," he admitted, "How many active volcanoes need diversion right now?"

Jane shrugged, she had no idea. Jones suspected it was not too many.

"I can't stop, that's the rub," Jones admitted. "This is the most fascinating pursuit I've ever under taken...and just imagine, I was forced into it."

"Then you are responsible for mankind?" she put her words as a question.

"Lord help us."

"Ya, and thanks for the vote of confidence.

\* \* \* \* \*

Young Doctor Marfa was assigned to the clinic at the complex. Only one other doctor was located there although they sure could have used a few good hands for all the patch work they had to do after the "volcano". Lots of cuts, bruises, a few minor burns and one serious leg and hand burn sustained by a technician who had tripped in the path of some molten lava. There were four good nurses at the complex, so she just checked on progress periodically while they did all the dressings and other dirty work. She really hated screams.

The American archaeologist flashed into mind as she worked carefully to remove some stitches she had placed just five days before. The worker grimaced as she tugged at the threads. "Do you know any Americans?" she asked to divert his attention.

"My Uncle," he said looking up.

"Small world isn't it," she clucked. "We think we are far away from foreigners, but we are not. We are all one on this earth. She pulled the last stitch on what had been a nasty wound. The worker breathed a sigh of relief.

Marfa thought about Jones again. It was inevitable that he would be captured.

She would be forced to administer the terrible drug. She had never done it before but she had seen it done. The results were not pleasant. The victim had been some poor thief who would not reveal where he hid a large cache of furs. Literally nothing was left when they were finished. He drooled, his eyes were vacant and he had wet himself.

She thought about her mother and father; she thought about the magnificent man whose flesh she had fondled. She felt the twist of lust surge through her lower abdomen. There had to be a way to get around this. A plan started to formulate.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I have to get into town," Indy told Jane, "got to make a few calls. I'm worried though, about there being surveillance. These guys sure in hell aren't amateurs."

"This should be easy, Indy. Tomorrow's Sunday. We'll just blend in with the other churchgoers. After the service I'm sure the minister will let you use the telephone."

"Service, whoa Babe. There is no way that I'm going to be in the same room with people who actually touch snakes."

"Got to be real, Indy, if you want to escape detection," she said firmly.

"Listen, Jane, I can't be close to a snake in a jar. If one of them bit me I'd be dead before you could get out your snake bite kit."

"Don't worry, I'll be there. I handle 'em all the time. They are wonderful gentle creatures."

"Yah, and so are tiger sharks."

They sipped coffee. It was getting late. Jones continued to expound on why he and scaley things should never come into close proximity.

Suddenly Jane let out an awful shriek and leaped up on the kitchen table. Coffee cups clattered onto the floor.

Indy jumped up himself knocking over his chair.

"What's the matter, for chrissake?" he asked his voice quavering.

Jane was shaking visibly "A mouse ran over my foot."

Jones laughed the laugh of the relieved. "The hell with Brother Abraham. We're going to bed sweetheart." He plucked her off the table and carried her into his room. She did not protest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Both were clean and plainly dressed as they joined the family in the old Sedan. It was a bit crowded but they squeezed in together.

Jones was already beginning to sweat. He squeezed Janes thigh and winked at her in an act of pure bravado. His heart was pounding. He tried hard not to think of snakes. There was a large sack in the trunk. Three little boys had hoisted it in. Probably caught all those rattlers themselves. Whirring and hissing noises were plain as day when they stopped at the crossroads. Was he going to make a complete ass out of himself in front of all these nice people?

"You nervous mister?" the middle boy asked tugging at his pant leg.

"No, sonny, I'm...I'm...fine. Just a little warm," he stammered.

"Boy, if you think this is warm wait til we all get to church. It really gets warm. Great for the snakes. They hate bein' cold."

Swell, he thought as beads of sweat soaked into his collar.

Jane smiled and squeezed his hand. Relax, idiot, he thought. You won't have to be anywhere near the snakes.

They all entered the church quietly. Abraham carried the bag. Jones spotted some surly looking types watching with more than idle curiosity.

He had hoped they would sit in the back, but, no, they had to march right up front. To THE PIT. Jesus Christ, he thought. An entire mound of snakes writhed and hissed up there. Abraham opened the sack and dumped his collection onto the rest. Real beauties with rattles a foot long and fangs to match.

Nausea welled up sour in his throat. The room began to get red around the edges, not a good sign.

Those guys were in the foyer silently watching. If he was so stupid as to pass out the thud to the floor would be very obvious. He took short breathes. The room was deep red now.

Jane was no help what so ever. She had a look of reverie on her face. My God, She's really enjoying this.

The minister at the pulpit was a blur. Jones had to brace himself to keep upright on his seat. The snakes were a blur too, but a moving one. He couldn't take his eyes off that deadly pile. One of the larger ones reared up and then slid out of the pit. A tiny gray haired lady quietly got up from her seat and shaking her finger and clucking she scooped up the reptile and carried it back to the nest of vipers. It hung docilely in her hand, its rattle limp.

As the service began with the drone of organ music, some Bach fugue, the congregation all rose and began filing up to the snakes. Each person reached into the pile and took one.

Jane had to help him to his feet and he rocked unsteadily. "Easy," she whispered, "those guys are watching. Follow me, we'll get ourselves a couple of snakes. Go for the copperheads. They're a little more docile."

"What's a copperhead?" Indy asked numbly as he shuffled towards apocalypse.

The closer he got the more blind he became. Jane grasped his right hand.

"This one," she whispered. "I'm really glad that they don't have any cotton mouths here. They're awfully aggressive. These guys are quite pleasantly calm."

Jones didn't hear her banter. He could feel the cool scaly skin rippling through his hands. He was having the worst dream of his life.

The snake brought his head within inches of Indy's. The glittering eyes stared without blinking.

Somehow he made it back to his seat in the back pew. He sat there not wanting to do anything but shriek and throw the writhing thing as far as he could.

The congregation started to sing and wave the snakes about. Jones did the best he could. He was not in good voice that day.

He didn't hear the small scream but Jane did. Still carrying her choice of fat rattler she ran to the side of Abraham's middle son, Joseph, a boy of eight. He had slid down in the pew. The snake had buried his fangs in the poor child's forearm and was hanging on.

"I didn't sin Father, I didn't sin," the boy cried.

Abraham held his snake over his head. His face was devoid of color. "God's Will will be done," he roared in a hoarse horrible voice.

Jane tossed her snake aside. It coiled up and sat transfixed. Grasping the offending rattler behind the head she forced its mouth open and pulled it from the boy's soft flesh.

He whimpered softly. "It hurts, Miss Jane," he said, "but I didn't sin, honest."

"I know Joey, the snake made a mistake."

"Abraham," she cried, "get my snake bite kit."

Abraham did not move. "You will not touch the boy. It is in God's hands now."

Jane looked at him and blinked. The congregation stirred. She knew that most of them had survived snake bites, probably multiple bites, but the boy was small and the snake had pumped in a great deal of venom. If Abraham refused treatment she could do nothing. She raised up from her knees and stepped back.

Indiana finally realized what was going on. So did the tough looking men in the foyer. Gingerly, Jones lowered his snake and walked over to the poor boy.

"Do something, Jane," he demanded, "where's your kit?"

"I can't," she sighed, "Abraham doesn't want help."

"Abraham, the boy will die," Jones yelled accusingly. Abraham turned his back to Jones. "God's will," was all he would say.

Jones pulled off his scarf and wrapped it on the boy's arm as a tourniquet.

Abraham turned and hit Jones so hard with an open palm that he went crashing onto his chest. The breath was knocked out of him.

The bad guys came bounding over and Jones was soon looking down the barrel of an extremely large hand gun pointed at his nose.

"Wait, wait," he pushed the gun aside, "I'll go but we've got to save this boy. Point that thing at them," he waved at the congregation.

The gunman shrugged but complied. The murmuring churchgoers moved back.

"Jane, for chrissake, get your kit," he snarled. He helped the boy to lay back.

"You're okay, kid. You're okay," he said as encouragingly as he could.

The boy seemed quite calm in contrast to Jones who was shaking like a leaf. Jane ran back with her purse. "I always carry a kit in my handbag."



"And I always carry a condom in my wallet," Jones snapped, his first spirited remark of the day.

Jane ignored him. She thrust a vial and a syringe into his hands. "Antivenom, I made it myself," she said with a degree of pride. "Draw up 6 cc's, I'll cross cut the wound.

Jones' hands were shaking violently. This is no time to be ignorant, he thought. He'd watched syringes being filled before. He surprised himself; he wanted desperately to save the boy.

He grimaced as he saw Jane take a scalpel and make a bloody X across the punctures. He handed Jane the filled syringe. A surge of nausea clamped at his chest. He felt a lot worse than the boy. He averted his glance as Jane injected the antivenom into the tissue around the fang wounds.

The boy's hand tightened in his. Tears welled up in Indy's eyes and he choked them back.

"Why'd that snake hang on?" the boy asked.

"I don't know," Jane said.

"Amazing," Indy exclaimed, feeling better since the boy was out of danger.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Thaxal, you have been recalled to find Dr. Jones," Gorgonovitch spoke with a sneer.

"Good," was all the pudgy alien said as she turned and stuffed an entire Hershey's bar into her mouth.

Gorgonovitch knew she needed no more than that. She would home in on her prey with some sort of sixth sense like a moray after a small fish.

He had just received word that Jones had overpowered the thugs who had captured him at the church. Something to do with a bullwhip. Where on earth would he have found that? How would he know how to use it?

\*\*\*\*\*

Max was kept busy fifteen hours a day, while Jock had nothing to do but wait for word from Jones. The archaeologist went with him on all his work assignments and talked incessantly.

It was hard to believe that one could converse about thirteen golden spiders all day long but this guy could...and never repeat himself except to extoll their beauty and value. He heard about the casting, the purity of the gold, the hardening agents, the species of spider after which they were patterned, the place where the gold was mined and how it was blessed as it was cast.

Meanwhile he had to trudge along trying to figure out their escape. He already knew he was too tired to run. Their guards, two very large gentlemen with rifles, would pick them off in an instant.

Another annoyance was that awful blonde creature. There was something not right about that one. He could not put his finger on it. Women scared him and had never played an important part in his life.

What really had scared him was the way she punished those who displeased her. A technician had broken a piece of equipment. She had him brought to her in front of the two captives of course.

She kicked him in the groin so severely that vomit flew from his mouth. Then she had him hauled to his feet so she could do it again...a senseless gesture towards an unconscious man.

McDuff was sickly acting after that...more pale and listless...but he still talked about the spiders...even the details of their sexual organs - since those organs were obviously on his mind. Sexual organs of metal bugs, bah, the little

scientist thought with disgust.

The most pleasure they were allowed was card playing at night because the guards wanted to play four handed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jones was hiding out in a barn. Jane had taken off back to the safety of Abraham's where she could watch the boy. He knew Abraham was secretly pleased about the sparing of his son.

A large owl was silhouetted in the moonlight with a limp rope-like form of a freshly killed snake dangling from its beak. He shuddered. To keep himself busy he thought about the glyphs on the pillar. Something about one aspect was really bugging him. He could concentrate on it now. He figured that he had gotten away. The bullwhip that he spotted in the shed where he was tied sure was a surprise but he didn't think he could overpower all six - so he ran. Those Russians sure didn't know much about tying people up.

He was wrong about getting away. Thaxal was homing in on him. She knew within feet where he was when she arrived at the cave, through the underground waterway.

She was met by a dozen men on small tractors. She smiled and pointed the way. Those strange little vehicles were slow but this was better than walking. She munched on a bag of chocolate covered peanuts not sharing them with anyone. Occasionally she grunted the direction they should take. Jones's aura was exciting to her. Yes, she did want him as a mate. There was no doubt that she would have him soon. The type of abuse she had in mind would not harm him in the least for the purpose he would be put to later. She would charm him easily with her alien powers, powers that had not been exercised for a considerable time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jones stood up knees creaking from having crouched so long behind the tree. He did not know why he did that. Of course, that would expose him to those evil types, all six of them. It did not seem to matter that he did not want to.

Breath escaped with a hiss as he looked into the dark eyes of Thaxal.

"You're...you're that girl...you...", he stammered.

"Yes, to all of that," she smiled as she popped a chocolate covered cherry into her rosebud mouth.

The long robe draped over her abundant body. Glinting in the sun an amulet shot a jabbing ray at Jones' eyes.

"Come here," she commanded.

He did. Any moment he expected to feel the sharp run of her hostile blade.

Considerably taller than she, he was surprised by the spring steel strength of her arm as she dragged his head down. Her lips met his. Immediately fire spread from their focus. Warmth radiated through his groin. This was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. He buried his face in the musky, vibrant strands of her raven hair. As he pressed her to him, her ample breasts crushed into his abdomen just above his belt.

A small voice from somewhere asked: Why are you doing this? Lust, raw and demanding silenced the voice. The forest called to him. Clothes must be shed. Together they must dance nimbly to the piper, then throw themselves down to be tickled by the wild flowers as their bodies were embroiled by spicy passion.

Whoa, fella, he thought, but he ripped off his shirt and let his trousers fall. No aches or pains hindered him.

Venus stood before him. Four feet eight inches tall and 150 pounds of quivering eros. The cape humanely fell from her shoulders so Jones could view her alien pulchritude.

They stood panting as the dawn broke. The accompanying guards had been ordered away. She took his hand and led him like a lost little boy. Soft straw cushioned his body as she pushed him down and then fell upon him snarling, licking and biting like a bitch in heat.

Slowly the aphrodisiac kiss crescendoed in his blood stream. He pawed and snorted into ecstasy.

After a time they slept huddled together exhausted. Then she awoke and reanointed her lips from a vial in her cape. She kissed him again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Depraved was not really descriptive of the sordid wretched awakening he had. Every particle of his being cried out from abuse. Little elves with giant hammers bonked his head. There was no skin on his lips and other delicate parts of his body. Bites, bruises, and gouges were everywhere.

He groaned as he forced himself to stand. Judging from the sun it was late afternoon. The "guards" were situated in a circle around him. She was ingesting a huge block of fudge. The waning hours did not enhance her complexion.

Suddenly, he knew what had been bothering him about the pillars for all this time.

"Christ, I hope its not too late," he shouted excitedly. She looked at him, her mouth encircled by soft brown sweetness. "The pillars, My God, they're too close together. If we don't get them apart fast we won't have an earth to worry about. Hurry," he said as he grabbed her arm and dragged her to her feet, "We've got to get back to where ever in that frozen wasteland that we were."

The excitement helped him forget about his pounding head. "Which way to the cave for the love of all that is Holy. Shit, Jesus. In Spiritus Sanctus," he exclaimed running about excitedly dragging the little alien with him.

She planted her feet and they stopped short. "What do you mean...about the pillars?" she demanded.

"You know about the pillars, okay?" he shuffled impatiently. She nodded.

"Well when the workmen brought them in they sat them too close together," he explained. "I've been translating the gray pillar's instructions in my head, so to speak, and I just got to the warning that they should be no closer than about a kilometer. If we don't separate them - BOOM!" he gestured grandiosely.

"Is this a trick?" she asked suspiciously.

"No, no, it's true, I swear," he insisted. "You have to take me back any-way. For Chrissake let's make it snappy. How long does it take by that water tunnel?"

"Mere hours," she said, "Let's go. What you say is true. I do have to take you back."

\* \* \* \* \*

The ride back to Russia was a lot more pleasant then his first. Jones was too tired to do much more than doze. He glanced at Thaxal from time to time and slowly it dawned on him that, just perhaps, she was not of terran descent. It was her face, relaxed, that gave her away...blank with flattened affect.

My God, I've had sex with an....," he couldn't bring himself to voice his suspicion.

Time passed quickly. Soon they were jolted by the catch nets. Within minutes the hatch was popped open and Jones was looking down the large barrels of many guns.

He wondered how the horny doctor was getting along. All the women in this scenario were sex fiends...what had happened to old fashion virtue...?

\* \* \* \* \*



Other - worldly, the five pillars melded into raucous color interaction which scared the hell out of everybody at the complex. They had been through enough. What alternatives did they have? Escape into the frozen tundra?

Gorgonovitch had to crack down on discipline while he packed his suitcase. The water tunnel was shut down for outgoing vessels. Everyone was needed here... terror or not.

The display was beautiful but already the pulsating energy possessed by the strange columns loosened overhead beams. A bad sign when tons of water and ice were supported by these beams. No distinct forms were visible just a miasma of colors which licked and snapped. The noise level increased moment by moment: giant kettle drums alternating with crystal bells.

Marfa listened anxiously from her clinic. All had been told to remain at their posts or they would be shot. Technicians began trickling in reporting vague complaints, nausea, headache, skin rashes, impotence. The symptoms were varied but Marfa began to suspect some sort of poisoning. Dr. Vodoya felt the same way. These workers were all in close proximity to the "pillar room". Marfa was beginning to see a pattern and started to keep epidemiologic data. Distressingly, the closer the workers were assigned to the pillars the greater the prevalence of illness. By the third day there were lines at the clinic door. Other workers were pressed into service to help the doctors. Over three hundred lined up to itch and wretch. Cots were set up everywhere. No one could stand up long enough to mind the store.

Gorgonovitch paced and insulted Pitrov. Pitrov wrung his hands and tried to keep his boss rational. This was no time for panic. Jones' arrival, therefore, was not heralded with the great excitement it was due.

The complex Chief had him taken to the scene of the upheaval. The rumble penetrated body organs and reversed the direction of peristalsis. The visual impact damaged retinæ. There was no way to focus on the objects. They were fluid; fluid and light.

"So what do you propose, Dr. Jones," Gorgonovitch asked as they observed the phenomenon through shielded glasses.

Jones laughed. "Easy, we just have to move them a kilometer apart. A mighty task for your sickly crew here. If we don't or can't the world will no longer have to be concerned with the mundane cuz we will all be scattered as tiny particles of dust."

"You think so, Jones," the evil scientist said brashly.

"I know, so," was the response.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We can't do it," the technician croaked hoarsely in the harsh language of far eastern Russia.

The claw-vise of the giant crane vibrated violently as the operator tried to slip it over the pillar. Jones grimaced and put his hands over his eyes.

"God in heaven," he muttered, afraid to look. Gorgonovitch noted his anguish with satisfaction. He punched Jones playfully on the shoulder. Jones backed off in distaste.

"You are afraid they will be harmed, eh, Jones?" the Russian taunted. "You want to see this through. Scientist to the end...admit that the pillars intrigue you far more than you would want your President to know."

"Politics has nothing to do with this," Jones snapped, "I am interested in the knowledge that can be obtained...you and your cohorts are the ones who would pervert it."

"And what would you do with the knowledge? Write treatises, textbooks and

papers...present seminars. Stand before your peers clad in black robes with perhaps a rich purple sash. Make more money than you had ever dreamed possible. Yes, Jones rich and famous." He slapped his thigh and spewed forth particles of his lunch.

Jones was about to reply with extreme indignation when the technician became more insistent. "We can't do it," he shouted adding a crude epithet for emphasis.

At that moment the two onlookers were interrupted as the claw glowed white and splashed blinding sparks. In seconds only the dangling chain remained.

"We're in real trouble," Jones said, "they've been in close proximity too long...they're activated. Won't be long before we are up to our asses in baby volcanoes."

\* \* \* \* \*

Hours had passed. They were in and out of the room each time knowing that there would be more color, more light...more shuddering and thumping. Each was so nauseated that they could not watch for long. The situation was hopeless.

It was difficult to think with the dry heaves and skin that crawled and split open. Almost everyone was affected by now. Emergency calls had been placed for more medical supplies but it would take at least a day for an air drop. Gorgonovitch had declared the area to be off limits. It was to his credit that he remained. Even as self-interested as he was, he realized that he might not see another sunrise. So what did it matter. Perhaps he could be of some use.

Jones was huddled in the farthest corner of the complex drinking terrible coffee, slowly, trying not to gag...he had to clear his head...he had to translate the last few parts...to the best of his now disturbed recall. The floor was rumbling and bouncing. Water was seeping in through hundreds of cracks. Not drowning again, he thought in despair.

Breathing deeply and calling upon ancient techniques he had learned in Tibet but never assimilated well, he forced himself into a relaxed state...even as cold water trickled onto his face.

Almost in his grasp, the answer would taunt him but evaded clarity. The vision of two circles became larger and larger. He jumped to his feet -hydrogen - that was it, the hydrogen molecule...hydrogen joined with oxygen to create - Christ, how simple, he laughed. Water, that has to be it. Why would those ancients want things complicated? Right, we'll douse those pillars. He ran in towards the center area forgetting how vile he felt. He started shouting, "Water, we need to soak them in water."

Gorgonovitch was there and Jones hurriedly explained what was needed. The technique was flooding into his mind now. They had to be soaked with water in a special sequence. They had to hurry because water was sprinkling in from the leaks. He ordered Gorgonovitch to get fire hoses ready. Now all he had to do was get the sequence right. Think, goddam it, think...spectrum...colors...yes ...blue...yellow...red...green...violet. Yes that's the sequence...I think.

More water started to pour in...there was no time. This was it. "Hose down the blue one...NOW," he yelled above the horrible howling noise. The technicians were so weak they could barely control the writhing hose. The pillar sizzled but slowly a stabilized form became apparent under the cascading water. The color faded.

"Now the yellow...hurry for chrissake." He had to step in to help as the technicians were being flailed about. The hose was icy cold and bucked into his gut. Slowly, the second pillar quiesced.

Gaining confidence they quickly dispatched the others. Then they collapsed

in exhaustion barely able to cheer, but trying to, never the less.

The levity was short lived for Jones who again found himself looking into the black depths of a large ugly gun.

"This time we will succeed Jones," Gorgonovitch sneered.

"Geez," Jones replied as the guard snapped manacles on his wrists, "and I thought we were getting to be good friends."

The ugly Russian looked like he was going to strike Jones but thought better of it.

"Better get these pillars separated, now." Jones warned, "This shower is only temporary."

"Never fear, my dear comrade," Gorgonovitch replied. "I have already ordered the wagons. It will be an easy task now."

\* \* \* \* \*

Again, Jones found himself in a tiny cell. He was manacled to the frame of the cot by both the wrists and ankles. His nose itched and little bugs danced on his skin. Lesions cracked open on most of his body like a pox. Hopefully, not fatal he thought.

Finally after several hours of terrible itching with no recourse to scratching he began to scream. This must have annoyed the guards because soon they appeared bringing the other doctor. All were smeared with the fishy black ointment.

Jones became anxious about Marfa...was she injured...perhaps dead? No, the doctor explained as he massaged the terrible black stuff into Indy's skin, just exhausted from almost three days of clinic duty. Jones was relieved but glad that she had not come to tend to his rash. She probably would have raped him on the spot, tired or not. The ointment felt wonderful even the awful smell was wonderful. He fell asleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Boy, are we getting some strange activity readings here," Max commented. He had been monitoring his equipment all day with some degree of uneasiness. It looked like Mauna Loa was going to give them a little action. This was totally unexpected from predictions made from previous eruptions. She had coughed a few times and fine ash was settling everywhere. It was hard to breath.

Suddenly, as quickly as it began the activity ceased and all was quiet except for McDuff who started talking about the spiders, AGAIN. He had been quiet and restrained when he thought the volcano was going to blow. It had been such a relief to Max.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jones was led down the now quiet corridor by six guards. This was not good. They marched him to the medical clinic. At least one hundred personnel were still in cots where ever space allowed. They were all covered with the greasy black salve. The place smelled like a fish market.

Gorgonovitch was standing with his hands folded. He was smiling, if it could be called that. His boots were polished. Marfa stood at a small clinic table. Her eyes were swollen and she had a large handprint across her face. Tears streaked down her cheeks and soaked into her smock.

On the table was a large syringe filled with what appeared to Jones to be at least a quart of amber liquid.

He planted his feet at the door and the guards bumped him hard. He tried to run but they grabbed him and thrust him into a chair. Again, the very large guns to the nose. He sat still and glared at Gorgonovitch.

"They gave me my mother's finger with the ring still on it." Marfa whimpered.

"They said my next gift would be her head if I refused orders. I must obey. Everyone must obey. Even you."

Jones looked at her as sympathetically as he could. He wondered fleetingly whether a bullet in the brain would be better than life as a drooling idiot. He did not have much time to think. She wiped his arm clean of the black stuff and as quickly applied a tourniquet.

He looked into her face and said softly, "Don't blame yourself, but, for chrissake, wipe your eyes so you can see what you're doing."

She sobbed and slipped the needle into his vein on the second try. He watched his blood flash into the dark liquid...his life running out. He shuddered as she popped the tourniquet and slowly injected the brain poison. The drug burned its way up his arm into his chest.

"Shit," was all he said, in good Russian.

Gorgonovitch laughed coarsely with satisfaction. Jones glared at him fleetingly before a vacuous expression overcame his face and his head dropped forwards.

"Now DOCTOR Jones," the scientist said, "we are ready to take a trip. You will like the climate, warm weather is good for trained monkeys."

\* \* \* \* \*

Five cargo craft fitted with skis skidded across the frozen runway. They had arrived from Archangel to load the pillars, each from their separate "safe" areas. Members of the entourage loaded into their assigned planes. Marfa and her patient swathed in furs and strapped on a stretcher emerged from the giant elevator. Blown by the harsh wind she hurried toward the plane pushing her charge over the bumpy ice. Two guards accompanied her.

Gorgonovitch, unfortunately, demanded that they be in the same aircraft. Marfa dreaded the long hours that they would be together. Such a loathsome creature she had never seen, even when she was assigned to the charity clinics on the outskirts of Vladivostok.

She looked fondly at Jones. He was asleep. His face was completely relaxed. Even with his broken nose and slightly irregular features he looked so beautiful to her. She longed to touch that face but dared not irritate Gorgonovitch who sat sneering at her breasts. He had been too busy before to notice that she was a nubile young woman. Now he noticed. His tongue darted from the remains of his mouth. He winked at her. She turned her head as if tending to her patient.

Jones groaned loudly. She put her hand to his forehead to comfort him. "Shh. shh.," she said soothingly, "you are alright."

\* \* \* \* \*

Thaxal was becoming irritable having been separated from her mate.. After she had safely delivered him she had been ordered to her newly assigned quarters. Being totally obedient she did as she was told. She was not in the least bit happy, however.

She used the time alone wisely to meditate and rejuvenate herself. The first night, when she became aroused she stole from her apartment and homed in on one of the poor technicians recovering in a cot in the darkened hallway. First she choked him into unconsciousness. Then she used a special potion she had concocted in her spare time to make him erect.

After satiating herself she committed the final insult. She sucked down the hot chocolate the night nurse had left for him in one gulp.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Shut up and listen," Marfa said harshly. "I have bribed the guards." Jones barely had his eyes open. He felt hung over but not the least

bit brain damaged.

"What was that stuff anyway?" he whispered.

"Shut up I said...a mild sedative and a good dose of vitamin C - you looked pale. I've drugged Gorgonovitch and that awful creature in the purple robes over there." She pointed to Thaxal sprawled in her seat with chocolate wrappers strewn about.

"I don't know about that girl...there is something about her...."

"I know what you mean," Jones said conspiratorially.

"They will awaken soon but not suspect anything - I am good with drugs," she said with an edge of pride.

"Yeah, I know," Jones smiled.

"You have to act the part of a man in the throes of mind control. Think about this well...it is not as easy as you think. It would be tragic if that slime Gorgonovitch suspected and tested the drugs." she whispered.

Their conversation ended abruptly when Thaxal stretched vigorously and reached for a bag of chocolate covered carmels.

The alien glared when she saw the gross lady doctor bending over her mate. She could do nothing but wait knowing in her cold heart that the good doctor would not achieve the ripe old age of thirty.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dark wood made the dim light in the chambers even more gloomy. The short, stocky man spoke little but the other seven men listened to his every word intently.

The chamber was located one-mile below the earth, a secret military complex outside of Moscow. There was an aura of uneasiness underlying the stiff disciplined conduct of the participants.

\* \* \* \* \*

Acting like a zombie was wearing on Jones. He never realized how difficult it was to keep a straight face...that is, a slack face.

After each injection, about every twelve hours, Jones was led to a quiet room and ordered to record his knowledge of the pillars' power. The real stress was being creative yet totally inaccurate. His original notes were buried in a sealed cask under the floor boards of Brother Abraham's barn. He was beginning to suspect also that good Doctor Marfa was slipping more than vitamin C into his drug allotment.

The sun shone and the warm wind blew in salty from the sea.

He was tired and wanted to stretch out in the warm sand and forget all this ugly business. Protocol required that he act more impaired after each dose of the drug. He was almost to the point of wetting his pants just for effect but he decided to keep that in reserve and just drooled voluminosly.

The biggest test of his acting ability was at the time that McDuff was brought in to look at the wreck of the man that once was Indiana Jones. McDuff's gelatinous persona had always amused Jones. The large man quivered and cowered as Marfa injected the drug with solemn ceremony, tears running down her face. One of the guards held Jones up by the hair so McDuff could reap the full benefit of the drooping lips and vacant eyes. McDuff was a coward in the absolute sense. He stood speechless, hyperventilating. A smirk began to twitch at the corner of Jones' mouth. He disguised the snicker...barely...with a sneeze.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sun was overhead, the local creatures shirped and chattered enjoying the heat. Jones was dripping with sweat and had developed an annoying crotch fungus.



"Have you completed your task, Jones?" the mutilated man demanded.

"Yesss," Jones answered with a prolonged lisp.

"Good, take him away, give him a bath...we don't want him to rot away." Gorgonovitch motioned to the guards. "But lock him up and keep a watch on him... I don't trust that man...he might be able to escape with spinal reflex alone."

\* \* \* \* \*

McDuff was given the task of compiling Jones' voluminous notes. They were absolutely Greek to him but his understanding of the content was not of importance. He was to organize them, isolate the key issues and symbols and prepare questions to put to Jones for some of the part which were unclear. Studying the documents with trembling hands, even he could see that perhaps the content was meaningless. He wondered how long he could "organize" the notes before Gorgonovitch would realize that he was stalling.

\* \* \* \* \*

A man and woman in somber clothing departed Moscow in a military aircraft. It was a chilly day even for April. Their conversation was quite animated with grimacing and gesturing, extensive note taking...but never a smile. They had plenty of light clothing with them as if expecting to be in a warm climate for a while.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blue lady had changed to bright lavender. The satin of the bodice showed the stains of perspiration. Her cough had increased noticeably since the evil group had been plotting their plan of attack for long hours.

Obviously a play for power was going on. Zvetgya constantly interrupted and nagged about the heat. Gorgonovitch had always hated this woman. He fantasized that when this was through he would create an interesting accidental death scenario for her.... She was powerful and ambitious, there was no doubt of that, but she relied too heavily on the powerful positions her brother and aunt held in the cult. She did not deserve respect; she did not even dress like a respectable Russian woman, but flaunted herself like a Parisian floozie.

Pitrov sat slightly back from the table in a position of deference to his Master. He listened quietly and intently taking notes. They had the results of the geological surveys done by Diederer before them and were intently studying the shear line along which the destructive volcano chain would be directed. Zvetgya was a mathematician and physicist by early training but Gorgonovitch noted with some satisfaction that she obviously had been paying more attention to hedonistic pleasures than to academia. She did not grasp some of the more intricate details...it had been wise to bring in sophisticated experts.

They had the kidnapped scientists' reports and studies in various stages of completion before them. Already one of the geologists had had some sort of heart seizure and was hospitalized. He was pleased that he had prepared for these contingencies and had sufficient manpower for backup and easy means to assure their total cooperation.

Placement of the pillars was mapped out according to Jones' directions. McDuff had turned over the compiled notes at the mere wave of a gun to his face. All had to be hauled by wagons through dense jungles. This would take some time, but was not impossible.

The scientists who were not pressed into service, irregardless of sex, were housed in the barred heavily guarded prison compound. Some had fared better than others. A few had seizures from the drugs. Some sat and rocked or starred at the lava walls. The fortunate ones like Max had been forced into compliance at gunpoint, Jock by fear alone. Those who had had drugs or

combinations of drugs were in terrible conditions. Max stalked about plotting their escape...digging a hole through the lava floor, overpowering the guards. He paced and he stewed. McDuff just sat in a corner pathetically. It took extreme self control for Jones to keep up his charade. He particularly wanted to help a poor woman who tore at her skin constantly as if infested by insects.

A green snake slithered across Jones' chest. He did not acknowledge that it was there. His toes stiffened but he retained his moronic image. McDuff watched this from his corner. He had chased Jones up a tree with a rubber snake once and he had refused to come down for hours. The overweight archaeologist's chest heaved and he started to cry.

\* \* \* \* \*

No sophisticated escape plan had entered Jones' mind. When two guards entered with Marfa and her large syringe he was limp and still until the last second. Then he leaped up and clunked the two large bald heads together. It was crude, but effective. Marfa dropped the syringe and the guards dropped without making a sound. All the alert and semi-alert prisoners began to mull excitedly. Jones put up his hand to shush them.

"Everybody is leaving," he ordered. "Take those who can't take themselves, grab at least two...let's go."

On the way out he clunked four more guards. All available weapons were given to whomever was alert enough to hold one. They acted like they were handling king cobras instead of shiny steel. Jones shook his head as he handed McDuff a forty-five, "Don't blow your head off, okay, compadre?"

The party of sixteen, including Marfa, slipped into the jungle. Orchids bloomed everywhere.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jones had relieved the guards of knives too. Marfa watched in disbelief as he cut a thick ropey vine and tied a fist sized stone to one end. He coiled it tightly and tied it to his belt.

"Better," he said patting the make-shift whip, "much better."

\* \* \* \* \*

They had not been gone over ten minutes before their absence was noted. Thaxal was dispatched immediately with a horde of guards. The trail was easy to follow. The prisoners were at a distinct disadvantage with seven of the group being vegetables.

Thaxal trotted right along for a chubby person. Reptiles and amphibians scurried out of her way. First she had decided she would kill that DOCTOR; she was, of course, expendable. Next she would have her mate; how she craved his furred face and his hard body. Then for dessert, a wonderful swiss chocolate cream, perhaps two. She moved with purpose.

Unexpected, was the "rock on a rope" wielded by Jones. It struck her squarely on the head and rendered her immediately unconscious.

Jones didn't wait around but slipped back into the jungle. Without Thaxal to lead them the pursuers became disoriented and lost the trail. So the party of sixteen had their first camp out in the rain forest. The wild boars were a bit irksome but they all lived to see the sunrise.

"We seem to be out in the cold," Jones said swatting some obnoxious blood sucking insect.

Marfa used to extreme cold, looked at Jones as if he were crazy. She suffered terribly from the heat as did most of the others. She was also horribly upset when tiny leeches dropped out of the trees and settled on all of their exposed areas.

Jones did not seem to be a bit bothered by these tiny blood filled creatures, but he still jumped a bit when snakes were about...and there were hundreds... mostly small and deadly.

"They can't do anything with those pillars...without me... the only possibility is that they might decide to place them in proximity and let the phenomenon that had struck the science complex strike again." Jones fervently hoped they would not resort to such stupidity. The uncontrolled force would certainly blow the earth to bits...he was certain of that.

Max Diederer took the opportunity to introduce himself. He was completely unfamiliar with Jones' work as an archaeologist but Jones was able to offer that he once had read several of his articles on the cave-ins in Peru. Jones had wanted to avoid this problem on one of his summer expeditions and told Max appreciatively that the material had been life saving.

Max was genuinely pleased and vowed support and friendship to the bitter end. He whispered as a warning, "For chrissake don't ask McDuff about spiders."

"Oh, you mean the thirteen golden spiders of Belize?" he responded, "God, I wouldn't think of bringing up THAT subject.

Max groaned.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The notes we so painstakingly extracted from Jones are completely felonious," Gorgonovitch roared. Pitrov pressed his hands together.

"Sir, we will find him. The island is not that large."

"But with Thaxal incapacitated how will we locate them? The jungle is full of dangerous creatures. He could be killed. The great plan would be forever foiled. FIND HIM, TODAY or you will not see tomorrow."

Pitrov knew better than to argue when his Master was in such a snit. After all, he had worked long and hard. The small Russian gathered up a light pack and ambled off down the dark green path alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Please come with me, Doctor Jones," Pitrov spoke softly and politely. The Russian casually waved an automatic weapon at the party. Some noticed him...others did not.

Jones rose slowly. No guards, no dogs. How in hell did the little guy do it?

Pitrov smiled. He was quite at home in a pith helmet. He was quite at home anywhere. Sometimes when you wanted to get things done right you had to do them yourself. He had not been the leader of the secret cult for over thirty years without learning a few things. Gorgonovitch was a crude necessity, to be used and then to be eliminated after his period of usefulness.

The horrible truth dawned on Jones. Pitrov kept smiling. He seemed to grow in stature.

There was no doubt that Pitrov would shoot the other members of the party to bring Jones back alive. They rose slowly and filed back through the almost obliterated trail.

Mentally kicking himself, with every step, Jones realized what a fool he had been to believe that Gorgonovitch was the real villian. He was just a gargoyle on a perch for Pitrov's personal amusement. Pitrov struck him now as a man who never failed.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Never send a woman to do a man's work." Pitrov smiled at Jones as he prepared the now familiar syringe. His gold tooth glinted in the Hawaiian sunlight.

He had easily slipped back into the role of quiet deference to his "boss".



The doctor, Marfa, was totally unreliable for this kind of task...but she could be kept around for sexual purposes after her mind had been altered...she was, after all, a good sturdy girl.

Dejá vue, Jones told himself. What a stupid last rational thought.

Pitrov pattered about toying with Jones, waving the syringe with its now deadly contents in his face.

"Ah, yes, I have seen the results of this. Automatons all, no will, no intellectual curiosity...nothing but obedient shells," he laughed.

Gorgonovitch had a strange look on his remaining face. He had never heard that laugh from Pitrov before.

Suitably amused Pitrov was now ready to continue with the day's work.

Jones closed his eyes momentarily and braced himself. He felt the needle penetrate his skin and the slow burn of the drug but only for a few seconds. His eyes snapped open as the machine gun fire spattered both Pitrov and Gorgonovitch all over the room.

Pitrov lurched forward breaking the syringe into several shards on his belt buckle.

At the doorway of the hut, the two Russians from Moscow stood, smoke pouring from the barrels of their weapons.

Several smart remarks coursed through Jones' head: Glad to see you guys, nice that you could drop by but he found that he couldn't speak.

Blood poured out of his arm through the broken syringe. He yanked it out and threw it down. It didn't matter he guessed. There was blood everywhere. Enough of the drug was in his system to give him some trouble.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three days later he awoke but it would be several weeks before he would recover. A lot happened during that time. Some of the drug victims got better, some did not, Diederer and McDuff returned to their respective universities. Jock finally got to finish cleaning the spiders...the job he was starting just as he was kidnapped, Zvetgys, the Blue Lady was taken to a Russian prison, Marfa was reunited with her parents, little Joseph completely recovered from his snake bite, but Thaxal had not yet recovered from her head injury.

All the secret agencies were there by this time. Everyone wanted a whack at Jones. The two Russian agents who had dispatched Pitrov and Gorgonovitch so dispassionately were Jones' first "visitors".

They did not introduce themselves but implied by their attitude that they really cared not whether he lived or died.

He wondered how much they really knew about the terrible plot. He demanded coffee to stall. A perfectly ugly nurse brought it to him...cold. They had to know that something serious was going on in the cult or they wouldn't have come. And he would probably be dead...maybe he was already dead....

\* \* \* \* \*

"We know a great deal about the pillars, Jones," the woman spoke, "you prattled on quite a while while under the influence of even that small dose of the drug."

"Let us say, to ease your mind, that we are not fools," the man continued. "Had we not had good intelligence about the cult the entire earth could have been blown into oblivion...but, of course, you know that."

"An ounce of prevention...," the woman continued. "We have no desire to cause panic...the funds for locating the pillars have to be justified...they are considerable."

Jones felt as he listened that he was at a verbal tennis match.

"So," the man picked up, "we are dispersing them throughout Russia...except for the yellow one...."

"That one," the woman fielded, "will be presented to your government as a gift."

"How will you explain the kidnappings and the brain-dead scientists?" Jones interrupted.

"Oh, we will shrug it off as the work of fanatics, which is perfectly true," the man replied.

"So Russia has a wonderful archaeologic find. Beautiful pillars, priceless ancient sculptures."

"And that is that," Jones said.

"Yes, that is that." both the man and woman replied in unison.

\* \* \* \* \*

Late May sunshine danced on his face as he got off the train at Safe Haven. He had opted for a sabbatical for the summer. Jane had promised that by fall he would be completely cured of his fear of serpents. He didn't really believe that, but, what the hell.

Idly he thought about the yellow pillar. He wondered if it wound up anywhere near the Ark.

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